



Azerbaijan Connections & Exchange

NEWSLETTER

Project-Based Learning Plans Reinforced by Exchange to Azerbaijan

Ten U.S. and Azerbaijani teachers developed partnered online project-based learning plans during an 18-day exchange to Azerbaijan in July. The school partner exchange is a component of the Azerbaijan Connections and Exchange program implemented by Project Harmony and funded by the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.



The sun shines on Azerbaijani and American teachers in Baku

Teachers spent the first week in Baku gaining a first-hand perspective of Azerbaijan's educational challenges and opportunities. Throughout the second week, Azerbaijani counterpart teachers opened their homes for an unforgettable homestay experience in which U.S. participants were able to contrast rural and urban living arrangements generating valuable insight into local realities. Azerbaijani and U.S. teachers traveled to the ancient city of Sheki and the mountain village of Kish for the Experience Sharing and Next Steps (ESNS) conference where they explored cultural values, broke bread together, and brainstormed upcoming online

projects.

Several events punctuated the participants' experiences. U.S. teachers visited the Zagulba Internally Displaced Persons camp north of Baku, listening to first-hand accounts of the residents' 14-year old flight from their homes. The teachers also met with Dr. Misir Mardanov, Azerbaijan's Minister of Education with whom PH has worked closely for years promoting Internet usage and democracy education in middle and secondary schools.

International online project-based learning opportunities are widely regarded as successful when the participants have a firm contextual understanding of one another's country and home. With this in mind, the participants completed the second phase of their reciprocal exchange begun in March 2005 when the Azerbaijani educators traveled to the U.S. for an 18-day exchange.

Teachers Christa Bruce (Ketchikan, AK) and Vugar Nabiyeve (Baku, Azerbaijan) co-constructed an eight-week project examining patriotism and compulsory military service. Ms. Bruce, an Alaska State Mentor Teacher values exposing Alaskan students to Muslim Azeri culture and hopes to engage the students in a discussion questioning whether or not fighting for one's country is the strongest support one might offer.

Teachers Jan Caldwell (Colfax, CA) and Ruhangiz Mammadova (Baku, Azerbaijan) anticipate a very timely discussion on free and fair elections. Given Azerbaijan's upcoming parliamentary elections in November, Ms. Mammadova hopes to model a free election of a Student Action Committee within her class. From this experience, students will discuss the respon-

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AZERBAIJAN CONNECTIONS AND EXCHANGE IS A PROGRAM OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, BUREAU OF EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS AND IMPLEMENTED BY PROJECT HARMONY

sibilities and privileges inherent to politically free societies.

Additional projects will examine the roles of national identity in the two countries, mathematical concepts as studied through globalization, and cultural understanding. All participating teachers returned to their homes and classrooms very excited to begin the online collaboration.

ACE Provides More Opportunities for Its Communities

On behalf of the U.S. State Department, Project Harmony is proud to continue its support to Azerbaijani schools through the Azerbaijan Connections and Exchange Program (ACE) until 2007. ACE will provide 72 schools with opportunities for online educational projects, international school partnerships, technical assistance, as well as information and communication technologies (ICT) training for new teachers to the program.

Highlights of the upcoming program include:

- *The Civics and American Studies Workshop* - a four-day workshop for ten outstanding ACE teachers providing participants with training and administrative strategies for ACE's civics curriculum. Educators will also be trained in interactive learning practices applied to comparative cultural and political studies. Upon completing the seminar, Azeri teachers will work with their counterparts in an online project, contributing their own resources and lesson plans for the Civics and American Studies website and CD-ROM to be published and distributed to ACE schools.

- *The John C. Ford Global Education Tele-Community Initiative (GEI)* - Project Harmony will partner with GEI to engage ten ACE schools in the GEI-administered science and technology projects in the 2005-2006 academic year.

- *International Holidays, Events and Celebrations* - Project Harmony will facilitate special events and activities for International Education Week, Global Youth Service Day, Interna-



PH staff member Baba Qasimov instructs students on ICT

tional Women's Day and Human Rights Day. These events will involve the students in community-based service learning events while using the Internet to join online discussions.

- *Youth Leadership and Civic Action* - This three part program will consist of: a Youth Leadership Conference, a Technology Ambassadors Exchange and Youth Civic Innovation Grants. Project Harmony will recruit and select twenty-five students from the ACE network who demonstrate leadership and solid ICT knowledge. These students will be invited to participate in the Youth Leadership Conference, where they will be provided with training, round-table discussions and small group workshops. The seminar participants will create and maintain the Azerbaijan Youth Leaders Network website. The nine most distinguished participants will participate in a two-week Technology Ambassadors exchange program in Vermont and Washington DC. During the 06-07 academic year the Youth Leadership Conference participants will be eligible to take part in the Youth Civic Innovation Grants program that will provide up to \$250 per project.

If you are interested in participating in these projects or any others, please contact Mark Lydon at mark@projectharmony.org or Baba Gasimov at baba@projectharmony.az. Also to keep abreast of all upcoming ACE activities please refer to the ACE website (<http://www.ace.az>) or the Azerbaijan Education webportal (<http://edu.ace-az.org>).

ACE Conference Proves to be "For the Teachers, Of the Teachers, By the Teachers"

Seventy-two teachers from across Azerbaijan shared their classroom ICT accomplishments at the Azerbaijan Virtual Schoolhouse Conference held June 29-30. Hosted in collaboration with Azerbaijan's Ministry of Education / World Bank Education Reform Program, participants demonstrated their successes through PowerPoint presentations and discussions of innovative student-oriented teaching models in project-based classes.

A virtual presentation by Mr. Michael Bailey, a geography teacher from Belfast, Maine, demonstrated the success of his classroom's online international partnership. Mr. Bailey, who participated from his school in the U.S., exhibited his Global Classroom initiative, connecting Azeri and American students via video interviews while fielding questions over the Internet. Conducted jointly with world literature teacher, Greg Applestein, the Global Classroom gives Azeri students an opportunity to study in Bailey's and Applestein's interdisciplinary World Geography class with their American counterparts.

Mr. Misir Mardanov, Azerbaijan's Minister of Education, and Ms. Elizabeth Murphy, Public Diplomacy Officer of the U.S. Embassy in Baku, emphasized their support for the ACE Program by encouraging the conference participants to



Ms. Afet Ibrahimova, Education Coordinator, Ms. Elizabeth Murphy, Public Diplomacy Officer, and Kerry Cosby, PH Country Director



ACE Conference Participants fill out surveys about using ICT in education

explore the opportunities at the Internet Computer Centers (ICCs). Ms. Murphy stressed the importance of establishing educational partnerships between the schools in the United States and Azerbaijan. "Using the Internet in the classroom," Ms. Murphy noted, "is a great way to link students and teachers to the outside world, to bring them into the global community and to strengthen ties between Azeri and American educators." In his speech, Mr. Mardanov also focused on ICC sustainability and the role that teachers have in involving communities and parents in the ICCs to ensure the ACE program's continuation well into the future.

Keynote speakers included Ramin Mahmudzade, the Chair of the Ministry of Education's Council on Computer Sciences, Bilal Huseynov, Head of the Ministry of Education's Information Systems for Education Management Department and Eddie McGee, U.S. State Department's English Language Fellow. The three speakers addressed the audience on subjects ranging from intellectual Olympiads to State Department funded online resources. Mr. Mahmudzade illustrated how teachers could participate in international intellectual competitions in conjunction with the Council on Computer Sciences. Mr. Huseynov outlined the Azerbaijan Government's computerization program and how it will benefit the education system of Azerbaijan, giving a wider network of schools the chance to utilize ICT, gain access to the world of electronic resources and build in

ternational partnerships. Mr. McGee focused on online publications provided by the United States Department of State Office of English Language Programs for use in English classes used to support interdisciplinary education initiatives.

Highlights of the conference included Rahib Bucaliyev's presentation on the use of PowerPoint to bring Web Resources into the classroom and Afet Suleymanova's insightful use of multimedia activities and youth community involvement for literature and civics classes. Sevil Amrahova presented her online resource created jointly with Abdulali Qasimov, a student from Baku School #189, using flash software to demonstrate the density of matter. Ms. Suleymanova and her literature students investigated human rights by studying Azeri literature and researching international legislation on the Internet. This project resulted in a student-produced documentary video. Ms. Amrahova and her students worked together to offer Azerbaijani high school students a way to understand the density of matter by virtually manipulating it with the assistance of Internet technology.

Conference materials including abstracts and PowerPoint presentations are available on the Azerbaijan Connections and Exchange Program's Education Web Portal (<http://edu.ace-az.org>).

ACE and Junior Achievement Continue Support for Economic Education in Azerbaijan

Project Harmony will continue its support of Junior Achievement's (JA) Economics curriculum by conducting a series of activities for program participants in the U.S. and Azerbaijan. JA and ACE will initiate and facilitate online forums for thirty to eighty students throughout the ACE and JA school network. One forum will be held each quarter during the school year, during



Students Present their Business Plans during the JA/ACE Student Companies Program as their mentor Bahar Salimova from UNOCAL Khazar Ltd. looks on

which the participants will examine market research, business startup, investment opportunities and advertising.

Students from both countries will conduct marketing research on particular products, answering three major questions in economics: what -, how much -, and for whom to produce? Participants will then examine advertisements for similar products in newspapers and on the Internet, allowing students to gain insight into advertisement tendencies in the global market. The business startup section will provide the students with knowledge of how to obtain funds for starting a business and how to earn a profit. Furthering market understanding, students will research online investment opportunities in the stock market in Azerbaijan and the U.S. Each student will choose a stock, invest in it, and follow its trends throughout the quarter.

As a final project the students will create an online resource to demonstrate the economic opportunities, challenges and situations both in the US and Azerbaijan. All discussions and resource creation will be facilitated by JA Azerbaijan and Project Harmony staff members.



ACE Offers Summer Training on Advanced Programming

Every year Project Harmony offers ACE teachers online summer training on using the Internet and computer technologies in education. This year nine teachers and three students from Baku Schools #164 and #245, Lenkaran School #10, Ismayilli School #1 and Ismayilli Village School benefited from the two-week-long training on advanced MS PowerPoint, MS Visual Basic and Delphi programming language. The participants successfully passed the offline training on basic PowerPoint and applied for advanced PowerPoint training in summer. During both online and offline activities the teachers and students learned MS Visual Basic macros and Delphi for creating test system applications. "The training helped us to introduce another great way of using computer technologies in our daily classes," said Shukufa Najafova, English teacher from Ismayilli School #1. "From now on tests are not going to be boring for my students!" The participants are now practicing the creation of an electronic book with tests that they will use as a distance education tool.



Summer Training Participants and Baba Qasimov, ACE Education Coordinator

The training materials are available on the ACE Education Web-Portal's online forum (<http://edu.ace-az.org>).

Azeri Exchange Participants in Burdur, Turkey

From May 16-26, eight students and four teachers traveled to Burdur, Turkey as a part of an exchange program conducted between Baku School #245 and Bahcheliyevler School in Burdur. The trip was the result of an eight-month online partnership supported by the Azerbaijan Connections and Exchange Program (ACE) funded by the participating schools.

Initiated in September 2004, the collaboration grew from discussions on culture and traditions into a long-term partnership through the online forum created by the Turkish students. In order to enrich the experience and strengthen the relationships between the partnering students, teachers decided to run the ten-day physical exchange that took the Azeri participants to Turkey. During their stay in Burdur, the Azeri delegates met with the town mayor, the chief of the city council and the head of the local education department, who provided the teachers and students with information about the legislative and educational systems in Turkey. "Our goal is to build and strengthen friendship between our children," said Dilshad Naghiyeva, biology teacher from School #245 during the meeting with the Mayor.

Exchange participants demonstrated their support for the political Turkish youth movement by attending a Sports and Youth holiday celebration on May 19. "That was a fabulous celebration," said Rustam Qasimzadeh, one of the exchange students. "I am very proud that I was able to raise the Azerbaijani flag during the event." The next day teachers from Bahcheliyevler School took their counterparts to Ankara, where they visited Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's grave. The exchange program ended with the participants' reunion in the historical part of Antalya, a major European tourism destination.

"The fact that we actually arranged this ex-



change will show our colleagues how the Internet and computers can be used to achieve some very challenging goals," noted Ms. Naghiyeva upon her return home. The partnership between the two schools will continue online in a forum (<http://www.turk-azeri.net.tc>), where the students will share their experiences and plan for possible reciprocal exchange.

Baku School #245 is one of ten ACE schools moved to the management of the Azerbaijan Ministry of Education in January 2005. This exchange is only one example of the great strides Azerbaijani schools have made in establishing the long-term sustainability of the Internet Computer Centers.



Azeri Teacher Wins Disney Hand Grant

ACE is proud to work with a participant amongst the list of Disney Hand grant winners.

Ms. Aytekin Aliyeva, an English teacher from the Southern seaside city of Lenkaran, and Ms. Emily Kistler, a Peace Corps Volunteer, collaborated to create a project supporting an Arts Education community fundraiser. The project involves students in grades 2-8 from Lenkaran School #5 and the Lankaran orphanage creating paintings and other art work. These paintings will be framed and displayed in a silent auction for local school directors along with regional



Ms. Aliyeva studies a globe

and national officials. Students, teachers, and volunteers from the community will participate in the event to raise awareness of local youth creativity and the importance of the arts in the community. One hundred percent of the auction's proceeds will fund the creation of art centers and supply purchases for both institutions. This project will impact an estimated 1,500 students, teachers, and community members.

Ms. Aliyeva is also a recipient of the prestigious Azerbaijan Teaching Excellence Award.

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